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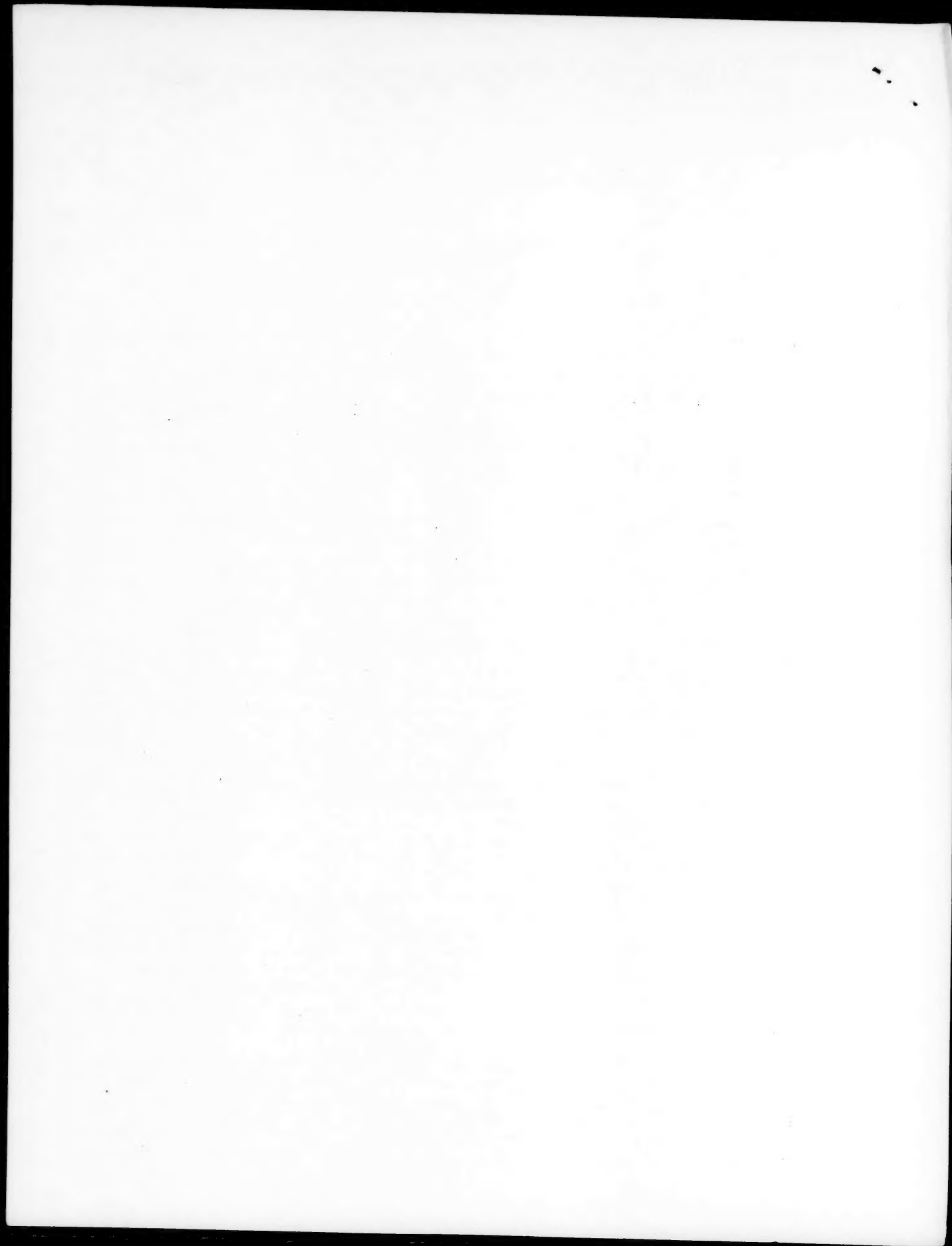
1956-57

Iraq Dec. 25, 56 (BS 4)

When we left Baghdad on December 11 for our fifth round, we returned to a base near Tell Im am Ibrahim. After we were situated and with two hours remaining before sundown, we went at once to Uqair to make some improvement in our sherd collection from that site. We examined the western mound where the Department of Antiquities did most of its excavating first. Then Bob crossed the modern canal which lies between this and the eastern part of Uqair for another look. Since it had rained there only a few days before, he found rather well defined plans quite visible on the surface. This, therefore, was a good opportunity to get a preview of part of an Ubaid town plan without digging. I must hasten to say, of course, that there is nothing new about exploiting a surface situation in this manner. It has been done many times before at other sites especially by German archaeologists. Not having brought our equipment for this particular type of endeavor with us, we returned to the Institut that night to pick up the necessary items. Bob and I spent all the next day with curious villagers looking on and with small boys playing nearby doing the best that we could with what we could see. We covered an area approximately 60 m. x 90 m. This, of course, is a relatively small portion of the eastern mound which covers about fifteen acres. The surface sherds are Ubaid, so our map must be part of a rather elaborate town plan belonging to that period. While what we got is no substitute for excavation, it gives a good indication as to what excavators might expect to find there.

The next day we pursued loose ends from previous work in and beyond the Musaiyib. We returned to Tell el-Jeir a second time to try to add to our evidence for Early Dynastic occupation at that site. In this we were successful. We even found a flint factory site from which we carefully collected as many of the finished products, chips, and cores as we could see and sift from the sand. Then we went for a third time in search of a small tell called Shcutha which had escaped us on our first two trips. Said Mohammed Ali el-Mustafa had told us about this mound and we were anxious to find it because it is a link in one of our canal/river lines. At the moment we are not sure to which line it belongs! While our sherd collection from there is not continuous, we did find material ranging from Samarran graphite to Ubaid sickles. While not really as important as our sherds, we had the elation of finding our first cylinder seal on the very surface! It is nicely cut in black stone and is well preserved. It shows a seated bearded god flanked by an attendant on one side receiving what I presume are two worshippers on the other. We had to visit 600 tells to find this first cylinder seal!

On this same day, it was the lucky 13th, we found the best Sumerian site which we have been the first to discover--our best so far, at least. It bears the ~~xxxx~~ No. 105. Its name we do not know. As we drove to the edge of the tell, the first sherd to attract our attention was a fragment of an ED I solid footed goblet. This was quite enough for us to jump out of the Jeep to pursue a careful examination on foot. What a prime collection--Ubaid sickles, stone bowl fragments, flint blades



a great quantity of the ED I goblets just mentioned, ED conical bowl fragments, numerous and probably early spouts, much ED "cut out" and incised ware, etc.! Although the mound is not large, a diameter of 250 m. by 3.5-4 m. high, it must have been a town of importance. The surface finds suggest that it would be well worth excavating. We mentioned our interest in this site to a sheikh at Ibrahim saying that it was far from villages and workmen. "If you wish to dig," he said, "laborers will be present!"

A week ago out in the middle of nowhere our Jeep engine died as we were searching for the last tells of the day--three small dots on the map which we incidentally never did locate. After the engine stopped, we heard intermittent spitting hissing sounds coming from under the hood. This we quickly raised only to see gasoline dripping from the carburetor down onto the hot manifold. Screws were loose and a gasket had given way. We poured gas from the carburetor into a camera lens can while Bob fashioned a new gasket from notebook paper. When it was reassembled, the engine refused to go. It would cough slightly but no more. The battery was soon near the end of its rope. I remained with the vehicle while Bob and Ahmed walked for an hour and twenty minutes out to the highway, caught a taxi into Mahawil where we had sent Yasin with the Station Wagon. Bob returned in the record time of three hours at 9 P.M. with Yasin who looked the situation over, removed the distributor head, cleaned the points, clamped a hand over the air intake on the carburetor, pressed the starter button with the other, and the engine roared to life. Two days later the Jeep stalled once more after passing through a water filled mudhole. Even after drying out it did not go. This time Ahmed noticed sparks on the distributor head. After this was cleaned, the engine started easily. We hope that these two instances are not harbingers of more such trouble, but after all the Jeep is old and it is getting hard use, so you can see what we anticipate.

We concluded this trip out working from Mahawil just off the Hillah-Baghdad road. We have now cleared the area out to this road and nearly down to Kish. In fact the Kish ziggurat was no more than five kilometers away. Our territory is roughly a right triangle whose W and S sides are about 50 kilometers in length. The W side is the Hillah-Baghdad road and the S approximately the Shatt en-Nil. The hypotenuse approaches the Tigris at points. We have visited about 800 tells in this area of 1200 square kilometers making the density of mounds even higher than Bob's previous estimate of .44 of a tell to each square kilometer. This is the work of 50 days in the field.

A Happy New Year from Baghdad!

Vaughn Crawford
Director Baghdad School